

Ken, FYI.

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To: healthprivacy-news@healthprivacy.org;

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Subject: Article

From www.cnn.com:

Bush flashes charm, humor on "Oprah;" Gore plays up medical privacy
By Ian Christopher McCaleb/CNN

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Gore in California

Health insurance companies have become a favorite target for Al Gore as he has made his way across the country in recent days. Tuesday's subject-du-jour for the surging Democratic hopeful continued that trend, as Gore sought to curtail the marketing and other uses of medical information by such companies without the consent of their patients.

Speaking at a Los Angeles-area community center Tuesday afternoon, the vice president said legal restrictions must be put in place to protect the sanctity of an individual's medical records and the broader notion of personal privacy.

"It is wrong for the insurance companies and drug companies to sell your medical information, putting profits ahead of people," Gore told an audience of seniors and medical professionals. "You have a fundamental right to privacy, and no powerful interest should be allowed to sell it or take it away."

Gore said as president he would push Congress to pass a law barring insurance companies, HMOs and other medical organizations from selling information from proprietary medical records without the consent of their patients. He said he would outlaw unauthorized dealing in all kinds of records, and give patients the right to sue over invasions of medical privacy.

During a one-on-one session with members his audience, numerous attendees took the microphone to tell stories of how they have been inundated with mail -- and electronic mail -- advertising drugs that could be prescribed to treat medical conditions from which they were suffering.

The time to act is now, Gore said, because the advent of new medical technologies could shift the consequences of medical records sales and distribution from nuisance mail to straight discrimination.

The mapping of the human genome, Gore continued, could yield significant risks for people who are genetically predisposed to certain diseases.

"What happens when you are able to take a single hair from someone and find out the entire genetic makeup of that individual, including whether or not there is a 10 percent higher than normal risk for lung cancer? Is that going to affect insurance rates?"

Gore said advances such as genetic mapping could yield great miracles, but use of that information must be limited. "Sometimes, it is not used in a scientific way at all."

"We are people, we are not commodities," Gore said.

Gore was scheduled to attend a fund-raiser in Silicon Valley on Tuesday night. He attended a high-profile fund-raising event in Los Angeles on

Monday night, where he told many attending entertainment industry executives he expected their assistance as he sought to push Hollywood away from marketing practices that advertised adult-oriented offerings to minors.

CNN's Beth Fouhy and the Associated Press contributed to this report.